FAITH AND HEALING.

By the Rev. FRANCIS BOYD,
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SOME very interesting articles appeared in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of June 18th. I have searched your correspondence columns ever since in the hope of seeing something from the "religious" side. In the absence of an abler pen, may an obscure clergyman make a contribution to the discussion? For, after all, the subject matter of the debate lies where the provinces of the doctor and priest overlap; or, rather, it might be truer to say that it lies in a region where doctor and priest face each other across a gap.

The crux of the whole difficulty is that point at which an energy passes from the spiritual to the material. It is a point that has always attracted man, and always baffled him. But we are trying, in our several ways, to approach it now, which is a great advance on denying its existence and throwing stones at each other.

It may be approached from both sides. The theologian or "religious" man starts from God and follows the process, as far as he can, by his own methods, and the medical or scientific man does the same from the opposite end of the chain. A certain amount of progress can be made from either end, but it is the region of the middle links where we all get out of our depth. Psychology is doing excellent work; it has given us real help, and promises more. But we are still far enough from a solution of the difficulty. Meanwhile, it would do no harm if we could get the conditions of the problem clear.

In the presence of a complicated difficulty of this kind, which lies exclusively in no man's land, there is always a temptation to grab a solution by false simplifications. These may be found in this case either in the direction of a material monism, or a spiritual monism. It is not many years ago that the prevailing doctrine in matters of health was a kind of medico-materialistic monism, and there are still, I suppose, numbers of doctors who would derive the very idea of spiritual or mental succours for bodily ailments. Sir Clifford Allbutt can write as he does because he is a man of distinction; but I suspect he is in advance of the general body of medical opinion. And even in his article there are signs of the old naturalism. And by "naturalism" I mean a view of Nature that is one-sided, exclusive, narrow—as narrow as the popular antithetic view of the Grace of God. It regards events as less significant because they are more manifestly inevitable, less "Divine" because they are more regular, less spiritual because they are more frequent. It is as objectionable as the false spiritualism which makes exactly the same distinctions from an opposite point of view, and with an opposite prejudice. Both sets of extremists are wrong. They begin by being intolerant, and end by proving incapable, and for the same reason. Let us frankly abandon both these positions. Some of us must remember that "religious" people do not seek the foundations of faith in the gaps left by science and the opportunities of freedom and Divine action in the interstices of order. And some of us must remember that modern scientific men are not to be identified with that intolerant and exclusive "Naturalism" which, in the best circles of thought, was buried at the end of the last century.

I suggest also that we might avoid false antitheses. Sir Clifford Allbutt, for example, says: "We know . . . that the physical life of a sick man depends, not upon prayer, but upon the timely arrival of the physician with the antidote." But why that contrast? Are the alternatives mutually exclusive? Must I choose between swallowing the antidote and saying my prayers? I know, of course, that there are foolish people who do so choose. There is a one-sided spiritualism which imagines it is more spiritual because it avoids material means; which refuses the sanitary inspector on the ground that "God will provide." That is a caricature of religion which naturally excites the indignation of your correspondents and all other sensible men. But most of us are sane enough to avoid such a choice. We know that spiritual force does not cease to be spiritual when it employs material means; and we ask that the corresponding error on the other side should be avoided—namely, the notion that nothing is a spiritual exhibition of power which does not avoid the production of material results. There is a halting and prudish spiritualism that shrinks

from "means," and there is an anti-spiritual temper which trusts to the means, on the ground that they do not belong to God. Are they not both wrong? We do not want any competition between God and the antidote. Is it not God's gift? Has it any virtue save that which God has given to it? Is the spiritual energy discredited because it touches the material scene a little earlier rather than a little later? It is only a matter of the point in the series at which the spiritual force enters. But there is no rivalry save that which is created by a materialism which regards the means as an alternative or substitute for faith.

Nor do I think Sir Clifford Allbutt is justified in restricting prayer to "spiritual gifts." They are indeed the more precious and to be more earnestly sought. But to rule out prayer for material benefits looks like a return to that old idea that religion finds refuge and a sphere of exercise only in those things which are supposed to be outside law, as if you could not pray about those things which were subject to law. But is not everything subject to law, though we do not as yet understand the law in every case? The reign of law does not exclude prayer (which is also a law) any more than it excludes personal freedom. I would rather argue that it is precisely where law is plainest and best understood that freedom and choice become most effective. I believe in spiritual healing, not because it is a breaking of law, but because it is a law; and I do not call a cure by spiritual means any more "miraculous," in the magic sense, than a cure by any other means; nor do I think parallel cases any more a disproof of spiritual healing than they are of surgical healing.

I must not strain the hospitality of your columns, and merely offer these rough suggestions as a small contribution to a very difficult question.

SPIRITUAL HEALING AND THE "GUILD OF HEALTH."

By STANLEY BOUSFIELD, M.A., M.D. Cantab.,
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THE Guild of Health issues an annual report stating that one of its three objects is "for the restoration to the Church of the Scriptural Practice of Divine Healing," and takes up a definite attitude regarding the "special gift" of spiritual healing, with corresponding claims to healing powers.

The last annual report showed that out of 429 members 351 were ladies and 53 ministers of religion, but no names of medical men appear in the list. It is particularly important to draw attention to this guild as it has at its head as warden a clergyman who also occupies an active position in the Church of England.

Although all such societies tend to increase when once they have obtained a considerable number of members to spread accounts of past "cures," yet a title like the "Guild of Health" appeals strongly to the many men and women who are continually looking out for something novel or fresh for the ailments of themselves and their friends. To obtain as warden a minister of religion must also greatly tend to attract fresh members.

I have kept in touch with a lady, suffering from myasthenia gravis, during the eight years of her illness; and for some time her condition with a quiet restful life had not varied much. But quite recently she joined this guild and was treated for six weeks by the warden, the Rev. Francis Boyd, at Clifton. She writes to me:

The first time I saw Mr. Boyd I gave him a full account of myself. He hadn't had a myasthenia person before, and he got a doctor's view of the case from a doctor friend of his.

This doctor, however, did not see my patient; but as the result of the faith and hope inspired by the treatment, after the first week she made continual desperate efforts to walk further and exert herself more.

I will give the following extracts from the letters which I received subsequently:

About coming home, Mr. Boyd had shown me that the thing worked, so he said there was no need for me to stay longer. I went to him every day for six weeks, which was longer than was generally necessary. . . . I wondered if I said pretty clearly why I left Clifton. Mr. Boyd did first suggest the following week for me to leave, but I knew he thought he couldn't do any more and that I might as well leave. . . . At